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ABSTRACT

Disadvantaged and advantaged high school students were tested for their self-concepts and their perceptions of their teachers' views of them. The teachers' perceptions of these students were also measured. From the vocational classes of an urban integrated high school, a sample of 91 disadvantaged students (66 males and 25 females) and 71 advantaged students (54 males and 17 females) were randomly selected. The twelve teachers of these students were also involved. Disadvantagement was determined in terms of annual family income (less than $4,000), living quarters (low-rent tenements or subsidized housing), and receipt of state aid or welfare funds. There was a minority composition of over 50 percent Negroes and Puerto Ricans among the disadvantaged students, and a white majority of 75 percent among the advantaged. An inventory of 40 bipolar traits was given to the students, and the teacher group was given some traits but with instructions to rate each of the students in the sample who were in the instructor's class. It was found that disadvantaged students view themselves similarly to how they believe others look at them, but the teachers actually see them less positively. However, teachers tended to think more highly of advantaged students. (Author/DM)

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Abstract

Interpersonal and Self-Perceptions of Disadvantaged and Advantaged High School Students*

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Disadvantaged and advantaged high school students indicated their self concepts and their perceptions of their teachers' view of them. The teachers' perceptions of these students were also measured. It was found that disadvantaged students view themselves similarly to how they believe others look at them, but the teachers actually see them less positively. However, teachers tended to think more highly of advantaged students.

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Interpersonal and Self Perceptions of Disadvantaged and Advantaged High School Students

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It is generally believed that disadvantaged children have negative self-images (Ausubel & Ausubel, 1963; Katz, 1964; Witty, 1967). There is less weight on the other side -- i.e., disadvantaged children do not necessarily view themselves less positively than advantaged children (Carter, 1968; Soares & Soares, 1969). It is further assumed that teachers of such children contribute to the maintenance of negative self-images (Clark, 1965; Foster, 1968; Passow & Elliott, 1967); or as Byerly (1966, p. 222) expressed it, the disadvantaged child has "developed unfavorable opinions about himself". If these assumptions are warranted, then disadvantaged youths should both indicate negative self concepts and reflect the negative images which they perceive in their teachers. Therefore, this study was undertaken to assess how disadvantaged youths perceive themselves, in comparison to the self concepts of advantaged children, and how they believe their teachers view them in comparison to how the teachers really do look at them.

METHOD

Subjects

From an urban integrated high school's vocational classes, a sample of 91 disadvantaged students (66 males and 25 females) and 71 advantaged students (54 males and 17 females) was randomly selected. Also involved in the study were the 12 teachers of these students. Disadvantagement was determined in terms of annual family income (less than $4,000), living quarters (low-rent tenements or subsidized housing), and receipt of state aid or welfare funds. There was a minority composition of over 50% Negroes and Puerto Ricans.

Advantagement was indicated by a minimum of $7,000 annual income with at least one adult in a steady job, living in one-family homes. There was a white majority in this group of 75%.

Procedure

An inventory of 40 bipolar traits used in previous research on the disadvantaged (Soares & Soares, 1969) was given to the students twice; first, to measure their self-concepts (SC) and second, their opinion as to how their teachers might rate them -- their reflected selves (RS). The teacher group was given the same traits but with the instructions to rate each of the students in the sample who were in the instructor's class (TP). Three index scores (from the algebraic sum of the positive and negative traits) were yielded -- SC, RS, and TP.

RESULTS

The t-test for correlated means produced no significant difference between the SC scores and RS scores of either group of students (Table 1). However, when the teacher scores were compared to both sets of the two groups of student scores, significance was reached well beyond the .01 level. In addition, the disadvantaged students indicated significantly higher SC and RS scores than the advantaged students and generally had higher and more positive scores than the teachers' ratings of them in contrast to those of the advantaged students. It is interesting to note that few disadvantaged students showed negative SC or RS scores. Yet, there were many more negative TP scores -- about one-fifth. This result was reversed for the advantaged students.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that disadvantaged students have higher self-perceptions, and believe that their teachers perceive them in similar ways, than do advantaged students, who in turn look at themselves less positively and feel that their teachers also look less favorably on them. The teachers, on the other hand, have lower perceptions for the disadvantaged students than for the advantaged. Both groups of students, therefore, tend to believe that others view them in the same way they view themselves and do not accurately perceive how these "others" -- that is, the teachers in this case -- really do view them. The teachers' ratings were quite different from what the students had supposed that they would be, lending support to the contention that persons see what they want to see -- "selective perception," perhaps.

Apparently disadvantaged students see their teachers as thinking highly of them when in fact they necessarily do not. Yet, advantaged students think that their teachers look at them less well than the teachers actually do.

Also, the advantaged students had lower self-perceptions, possibly from feeling an even greater pressure to succeed. This result is similar to the finding of Rosenberg (1965) in that the "Old Yankee stock" children have a self-esteem level which is lower than that of the other groups -- a surprising result since they tend to possess those status characteristics which are more likely to be associated with high self-esteem.

Table 1

Differences Between Self Concept,
Reflected Self-Teachers, and
Teacher Perception Mean Scores and Standard Deviations,
Disadvantaged and Advantaged
Students

Students	SC	t	RS	t	TP
Disadvantaged n = 91					
M	20.72	ns	19.76	3.31**	11.02
SD	8.93		9.98		10.29
Advantaged n = 71					
M	17.09	ns	15.02	2.73**	21.99
SD	10.08		10.90		9.29
t	2.39*		2.86**		7.07***

N = 162.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

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